

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MOGADI 00621 281045Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, EG, SO, UR

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOMALIA

1. DURING APRIL 24 DISCUSSION OF RECENT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMALIA, EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE COLONEL MOHAMMED NASR-EL-DIN TOLD ME THAT SOVIET ADVISORS HAD IRRITATED SIAD WITHIN PAS SEVERAL MONTHS BY INSISTING ON INSTALLATION OF MORE COMPLETE DEFENSE SYSTEM ALONG ENTIRE SOMALI COAST, INTEGRATING SELECTED SHORE FACILITIES WITH SOVIET VESSELS AND JOINT SOMALI/SOVIET FISHING FLEET WHICH WILL OPERATE IN COASTAL WATERS. SOVIET/SOMALI FISHING VESSELS WOULD BE OUTFITTED WITH RADIO AND ELECTRONIC GEAR FAR BEYOND FISHING NEEDS AND SOVIET-BUILT SHORE INSTALLATIONS WOULD LINK THESE SHIPS IN WARNING NET WHICH WOULD FULLY PROTECT ENTIRE SOMALI COAST AND ADJACENT WATERS AGAINST FOREIGN PENETRATION. (FYI I ASSUMED COLONEL NASR-EL-DIN WAS DESCRIBING BOTH SURFACE AND ASW NET. END FYI)

2. SIAD HAD REPORTEDLY RESISTED SOVIET PRESSURE INITIALLY, EXPLAINING THAT CURRENT DEFENSE SYSTEM ADEQUATE TO SOMALI NEEDS. HE HAD FINALLY CAPITULATED, HOWEVER, BUT HIS INITIAL RESERVATIONS WERE TROUBLESOME TO SOVIETS AND -- ACCORDING TO EGYPTIANS -- HAD BEEN FACTOR IN RECENT SOVIET/SIAD DIFFICULTIES. EGYPTIANS BELIEVE THOSE PROBLEMS NOW RESOLVED HOWEVER AND SIAD BACK IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MOGADI 00621 281045Z

SOVIET FOLD (SEPTTEL). (FYI WE

HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT EXTENT OF SIAD/SOVIET MISUNDERSTANDINGS.
END FYI)

3. NASR-EL-DIN SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD REPORTS BOUT RECENT STATEMENTS BY SECDEF SCHLESINGER REGARDING SOVIET MISSILE FACILITY AT BERBERA. HE HAD NOT RPT NOT SEEN ARTICLE AND ASKED IF I WOULD PROVIDE COPY. HE SAID THAT EGYPTIANS WERE REASONABLY WELL INFORMED ON SOVIET ACTIVITY IN SOMALIA AND THEY HAD NO RPT NO INFO ON ANY SOVIET QTE NUCLEAR WEAPON UNQTE FACILITY AT BERBERA. I DID NOT DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER WITH HIM BUT SAID I WOULD PROVIDE HIM WITH NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW TO CLARIFY SCHLESINGER REMARKS.

4. ACCORDING TO NASR-EL-DIN, SOVIETS HAD BUILT OR BEGUN TO BUILD NUMBER OF FACILITIES ALONG SOMALI COAST, FROM BERBERA TO CHISIMAYU. SOME FACILITIES WERE DISGUISED AS POL STORAGE TANKS OR OTHER-WISE CONCEALED FROM VIEW AND AGAIN I ASSUMED HE WAS TALKING ABOUT ASW FACILITIES. HE SAID FURTHER THAT HE HAD NO RPT NO INFORMATION THAT SOVIET NUCLEAR SUBMARIES WERE CALLING AT BERBERA BUT HE DID KNOW THAT SOVIET VESSELS LEFT BERBERA TO SERVICE SOVIET NUCLEAR SUBS AT SEA.

5. NASR-EL-DIN ALSO TOLD ME THAT HE HAD FINALLY IDENTIFIED SOVIET-BUILT MISSILE INSTALLATIONS AROUND MOGADISCIO AND HE BELIEVED THEY WERE REASONABLY COMPLETE NOW (HE HAD SPOTTED ONE FACILITY FROM AIR ON RETURNING TO MOGADISCIO LAST AUTUMN). HE WAS UNDECIDED AS TO WHETHER MISSILES WERE SAM-2'S OR SAM-3'S. HE THOUGHT SIMILAR FACILITY WOULD BE BUILT SOON AT BERBERA BUT HE WASN'T CERTAIN.

6. HE DID NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHETHER SOVIET TU-95'S OR IL-38'S HAD BEGUN TO USE SOMALI AIRFIELDS BUT HE WAS INCLINED TO DOUBT IT. NEVERTHELESS, HE THOUGHT SOMALI GOVT WOULD MAKE THEM AVAILABLE FOR SOVIET USE WHENEVER THEY SO REQUIRED.

7. I ASKED COL. NASR-EL-DIN WHETHER SCHLESINGER INTERVIEW OR BBC COMMENTS ON SOVIET ROLE IN SOMALIA HAD PROVOKED ANY COMMENT FROM HIS CONTACTS IN SOMALI ARMY. (IN PAST, NASR-EL-DIN HAS PASSED ON SOMALI MILITARY COMMENTS ON QTE AGGRESSIVE UNQTE US ROLE IN INDIAN OCEAN AND THEIR ALLEGATIONS THAT US EMPLOYS QTE ARTIFICIAL MOONS UNQTE TO FOLLOW SOMALI MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS --

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MOGADI 00621 281045Z

A CHARGE NASR-EL-DIN DISMISSES SINCE HE DOWNGRADES US INTEREST IN SOMALIA AND BELIEVES THOSE SUSPICIONS CHARACTERISTIC OF VANITY OF SOMALI MILITARY.)

8. HE SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD NO COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF SNA AND HE DISMISSED BBC COMMENTARY AS UNHELPFUL PROPAGANDA. HIS MISSION IN SOMALIA IS TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT WITH SNA AND TO DETERMINE DEGRESS TO WHICH SOVIET ADVISORS AND SOVIET IDEOLOGICAL INDOCT-

RINATION HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL AMONG SOMALI MILITARY. HE BELIEVES THEY HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL AND THAT SAMANTAR, VICE COMMANDANT FADIL, AND AIR FORCE CHIEF YUSSUF HASSAN ARE MARXISTS PURE AND SIMPLE. HE WAS HOWEVER UNCLEAR AS TO WHAT LATEST SCHLESINGER QTE PROPAGANDA EFFORT UNQTE WAS INTENDED TO ACHIEVE IN SOMALIA.

9. I TOLD NASR-EL-DIN I THOUGHT IT WAS INCORRECT TO DESCRIBE SCHLESINGER'S REMARKS AS PROPAGANDA -- BUT HE COULD JUDGE THAT BETTER FOR HIMSELF ONCE HE HAD READ NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW. I THOUGHT IT WAS USEFUL FROM TIME TO TIME TO LET OTHER AFRICAN AND ARAB COUNTRIES KNOW IN MORE PRECISE TERMS NATURE OF SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOMALIA.

10. REAL QUESTION AS ONE OF TACTICS AND TIMING. I SAID I HAD GENUINE RESERVATIONS ABOUT WISDOM OF RECENT BBC BROADCASTS DESCRIBING SOVIET ROLE IN SOMALIA. SOMALI LISTENERS WERE AWARE OF SOVIET PRESENCE AND KNEW PERHAPS FAR MORE THAT BBC GAVE THEM CREDIT FOR KNOWING. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT IN SOMALE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF BROADCASTS WERE TO REINFORCE SOVIET POLICY LINE IN SRC AND WITH SIAD. SIAD'S SPEECHES SHOWED THAT HE ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE IDEOLOGICAL CLASH BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE AND IMPERIALIST FORCES WHICH IMPLIED BOTH OVERT AND COVERT HOSTILITY IN WEST TO SIAD AND HIS REGIME. BBC BROADCASTS THEREFORE TENDED TO REINFORCE SOVIET UNION'S OWN IDEOLOGICAL EFFORT WITH SIAD AND CONVINCE HIM EVEN MORE THAT SOVIET SUPPORT ALL THE MORE ESSENTIAL IN VIEW OF WESTERN HOSTILITY. SINCE NASR-EL-DIN HAD TOLD ME THAT SIAD NOW FIRMLY BACK ON SOVIET TACK, I WONDERED TO WHAT EXTENT BBC BROADSIDES HAD COMPLEMENTED SOVIET EFFORT HERE.

11. NASR-EL-DIN DIDN'T KNOW BUT HE DATED POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL RECONCILIATION IN SRC FROM EARLY APRIL (SEPTTEL).

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 MOGADI 00621 281045Z

12. COMMENT: COLONEL NASR-EL-DIN IS REASONABLY WELL-INFORMED ON SOMALI MILITARY AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES, AND HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH SAMANTAR, FADIL AND YUSSUF HASSAN. I HAVE RESTRICTED MY CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM IN PAST TO GENERAL DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY SCENE HERE AND HAVE NEVER INQUIRED SPECIFICALLY OR POINTEDLY ABOUT NUMBERS AND KINDS OF SOVIET WEAPONRY, A RESTRAINT WHICH HAS ENABLE HIM IN TURN TO DISCUSS LOCAL SCENE MORE CANDIDLY AND TO VOLUNTEER DETAILS EVEN WHEN DETAILS WEREN'T SOLICITED. HE IS EXTREMELY SUSPICIOUS OF DIPLOMATS ENGAGED IN MIL ATTACHE WORK. WE HAVE CLOSE WORKING AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP.

HAMRICK

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